

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CABINET 17 May 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Libraries public consultation phase two - Options for cost savings in libraries provision in the borough</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Sarah Hayward, Interim Executive Director of Place Robert Hunt, Interim Head of Assets &amp; Involvement, Place</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Oliver Lewis, Member for Culture &amp; Regeneration</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>

#### **SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

Libraries services have savings targets of 15% in 2021/22. As a statutory service public consultation must be conducted if there is a reduction in service. A first phase of public consultation on a reduction in libraries services was held 14<sup>th</sup> January to 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Feedback from residents and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Scrutiny meeting have shaped a second, more detailed, proposal on the future of Libraries provision in Croydon.

The report appraises several options based upon achieving the savings target and the impact upon the service and residents. The options considered are:

- Close five libraries
- Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough
- Five community run libraries
- Outsource all libraries
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (one day per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries

A second phase of consultation will be held for a period of eight weeks.

A final report will be produced for Council to make a formal decision on the changes to the Libraries service. Changes to service delivery will be implemented as soon as possible to achieve the necessary savings within the Renewing Croydon MTFs timetable.

#### **CORPORATE PRIORITY/ POLICY CONTEXT**

This report arises from the proposal in the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 Cabinet paper to close or operate five libraries on a cost neutral basis as part of the Renewing Croydon savings targets.

This report will ensure that the proposals for Libraries services align with the Council's New Ways of Working:

- We will live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents.
- We will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough. We will follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic injustice.
- We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. And to keep our streets clean and safe.

To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

In the Renewing Croydon proposals Libraries were asked to make savings of 15% of the operating budget of £3,410,000, or £511,500.

This report considers the options for achieving the savings target while also maintaining a statutory libraries service.

- Close five libraries - £432,959
- Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough - £506,000
- Five community run libraries - £359,707
- Outsource all libraries - £511,500
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (one day per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries - £352,526
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries - £579,463

### **KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: 2221CAB**

The notice of the decision will specify that the decision may not be implemented until after 13.00 hours on the 6th working day following the day on which the decision was taken unless referred to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out below:

#### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Commence the second phase of public consultation on proposed changes to the Libraries service from the following options:
- Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough
  - Outsource all libraries
  - Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the activities that have taken place to date as part of the first phase of the Libraries public consultation and the feedback received. The report then covers the options available to reduce operating expenditure in Libraries while maintaining a statutory service. The report recommends options that meet the savings target to be meaningfully consulted on with the public. To conclude, the report will outline the next steps in the Libraries public consultation.
- 2.2 The findings contained in this report relate to the feedback from the Libraries public consultation that was held between 14<sup>th</sup> January and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The consultation proposed the closure or cost neutral to the Council operation of five libraries at Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley and South Norwood.
- 2.3 The report reviews the activities undertaken by the Council leading up to and during the first phase of consultation. This includes the rationale for the decision to select the five libraries in the proposal. It will also review how the Council has actively engaged with residents during a period of national lockdown, including public consultation through digital means.
- 2.4 Analysis of the 2,510 completed consultation surveys and the feedback from the quantitative and qualitative questions.
- 2.5 Cost saving options have been considered. The report considers the strengths and weaknesses of each option. Three options have been recommended for further public consultation.
- 2.6 The report concludes with details of the next stages of the consultation process, culminating in a decision making stage at Cabinet. Following agreement at May Cabinet, phase two of the consultation run for eight weeks. A report will be presented to Council for a final decision.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Public library services are funded and either run or commissioned by local government. Library authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 '*to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons for all those who live, work or study in the area*' (section 7). The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities or providing access to wifi and computers).

In providing this service, councils must, among other things:

- encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b))

- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (in accordance with section 8(3))
- 3.2 Croydon Council solely owns thirteen libraries across the borough, and jointly owns Upper Norwood Library with Lambeth Council. These libraries are relatively evenly distributed throughout the borough. The borough is divided into north, central and south; with each area containing a large hub library, medium sized branch libraries, and smaller local libraries.
- 3.3 In January 2018 the Libraries service was in-sourced following the operator, Carillion, going into administration. The Council harmonised terms and conditions for staff, and restructured the service to achieve £300,000 of savings.
- 3.4 In 2019, the Council published the Libraries Plan 2019-28 with a vision to Involve, Inform, and Inspire through the libraries provision in the borough.

The themes were:

- A library service designed around the needs of our residents and communities
  - Croydon Libraries as the ‘front door’ of the Council enabling services to be delivered locally
  - Libraries at the heart of Croydon’s cultural offer, celebrating the written and spoken word in particular
  - Modern, welcoming, inclusive and accessible library facilities and buildings
- 3.5 Alongside the Libraries Plan 2019-28, there was a commitment to invest £5.2m over three years to refurbish and refresh libraries buildings. Over the summer of 2019 Selsdon Library was refurbished. In November 2019 works began to undertake a roof replacement and major refurbishment at Norbury Library, which was completed in December 2020. Plans were also in place to move South Norwood Library to a new development on Station Road. In addition, by January 2020 the ICT infrastructure had been upgraded at all thirteen libraries, including full fibre broadband, new PCs, and improved Wi-Fi.
- 3.6 Nationally, there have been a significant increase in the number of libraries closed or handed over to community organisations to operate following the introduction of austerity. In 2013, Croydon made the decision to outsource the Libraries service, while local authorities across the country decided to close or community operate parts of their service.
- 3.7 Over the last decade the number of users of libraries nationally has been in decline. In Croydon there has been a reduction in visits and book issues of 50% in the last 10 years, which generally follows the national trend. This decrease in usage is despite an increase in population of over 20% in the last 20 years within the borough. This decrease in usage is due to a number of factors.

- The way that people access information has changed, with the rise of the internet at home, smart phones, and cheap and quick access to books through services such as Amazon.
  - Spending per person by Libraries has reduced over the last 10 years. In 2010/11 the service had a total budget of £7,500,000, equating to £20.56 per person. In comparison, by 2019/20 this had decreased to a budget of £3,500,000, equating to £9.05 per person. This is currently the lowest per person across London boroughs.
  - Croydon's book fund remained static for 10 years, before being increased by 9% in 2019. The price of books and the demand for digital content has increased during this time, which has forced the Libraries service to find greater value for money through consortia purchasing power, by joining The Libraries Consortium.
  - In contrast, the demand for free, reliable IT services have increased from residents who do not have access to a computer or the internet at home. Access to IT in libraries helps to bridge the digital divide for many residents within the borough. The ICT equipment was upgraded in 2013 but over time became slow and unreliable, which has contributed to a downturn in visitor figures. A full upgrade to full fibre broadband, new PCs and Wi-Fi in January 2020 has considerably improved the digital service provision. Due to Covid the benefits of this service have not yet been fully realised.
  - Feedback from residents following the in-sourcing of the service from Carillion highlighted that the buildings are looking tired and in need of refreshing. The Libraries Plan 2019-28 programmed for all thirteen libraries to be refurbished to make them 'modern, welcoming, inclusive and accessible' spaces. To date, Selsdon and Norbury libraries, and Thornton Heath reception area have been refurbished.
- 3.8 Croydon's libraries are used for events and activities. These range from Rhymetime and Storytime, homework clubs and study space for younger residents, to digital access training, job clubs, reading groups, knit-and-natter for older residents. Between April 2019 and March 2020 Libraries hosted 6,261 events and activities, with 73,965 attendances. Prior to Covid, Libraries were being used as the 'front door to the Council', where other services could come alongside residents in a safe space to deliver activities and information. This involved coordinating Council or voluntary support services at times when residents were using the building for other activities to help increase access to advice and information.
- 3.9 The Libraries services was asked to make further reductions in the operating budget as part of the Renewing Croydon Plan. With an annual operating budget of £3,410,000 (2020/21) the target was set at £511,500. The service is already lean, and has on average more library buildings than our peers.
- 3.10 A review of the usage of the service identified some keys points:

- Five of our libraries (38%) produced less than 15% of the footfall and book issues across the service.
- They all had another library with 1.5 miles.
- All of the buildings had maintenance requirements in the next three years that would require capital expenditure from the Council. Some of the remedial works were significant.

3.11 The five libraries identified are:

- Bradmore Green
- Broad Green
- Sanderstead
- Shirley
- South Norwood

## **4 PHASE ONE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES**

- 4.1 In December 2020 a meeting with colleagues from the Department of Communities, Media and Sport (DCMS) was held to discuss the process for reducing Libraries service provision in the borough. This outlined the requirement of a two-stage process of public consultation. The first stage should include a formative proposal, and be subject to meaningful feedback from residents, business, community groups, and both members and non-members of the library. The second phase should be more specific, focusing upon a few options, and provide full details of the impact that the changes will have on the service.
- 4.2 The proposal was to close five libraries (Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley, and South Norwood), or find an alternative that would not require any council funding.
- 4.3 The first phase of the Libraries public consultation was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021, to run until 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021, but extended mid-consultation by one week to allow for delays in the postal service brought about by Covid restrictions.
- 4.4 The consultation was primarily undertaken online due to the third national lockdown. The Council followed recently updated consultation guidance from government on holding public consultations during lockdown restrictions. An online survey was created on the Libraries consultation website, with paper copies available on request via a dedicated answerphone.
- 4.5 At the start of the consultation a fact sheet of information was shared on each of the libraries in the proposal. Additional information was provided throughout the first phase of consultation, either on request from residents or as it became pertinent from feedback received.
- 4.6 Halfway through phase one, the Council hosted seven webinars to provide further detail, respond to frequently asked questions, and answer live questions through a Q&A. The webinars were held outside of usual working

hours to allow as many residents as possible to attend. The first webinar, on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2021, covered the impact on the Libraries service as a whole. This was followed by a webinar with the Community Managed Libraries National Peer Network, and demonstrated six models of community run library from across the country. On the evenings 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 webinars were then held for each of the five libraries included in the proposal. There were 304 live attendees at these events, and a further 477 views of the webinars afterwards.

- 4.7 Additional information was updated on the consultation website after the webinars. This included recordings of the webinars and the presentation slides, FAQs, floor plans, and more detailed library usage information.
- 4.8 During the consultation, and especially after the webinars, a number of community groups and individuals approached the Libraries service expressing an interest in partnering with the Libraries service. Expressions of interest have so far come from:
- Asian Resource Centre Croydon
  - Coulsdon Primary School
  - Friends of South Norwood Library
  - Museum of Diversity
  - Sanderstead United Reform Church
  - Shirley Children's Centre
  - West Wickham Baptist Church
- 4.9 The first phase of public consultation closed at midnight on 14th March 2021. There were 2,510 completed surveys, of which 38 were paper forms and two completed over the telephone.
- 4.10 The main feedback themes from a resident's view were:
- Services - residents value:
    - Book borrowing
    - Digital access (PCs, printing, internet)
    - Study/work space
    - Social space/community hub
  - Equalities:
    - Closures will disproportionately impact deprived areas
    - Children, young families and the elderly will be most impacted
  - Timing - communities need libraries post-lockdown
  - Financial - residents feel that they are paying the price for financial mismanagement
  - Travel – residents unable to travel to alternative locations due to cost, logistics, personal frailty, and fear of crime.
  - Social:
    - “Heart of the community”, good for mental health and wellbeing
    - Members value activities and events in libraries
    - Education – importance of literacy and attainment
    - Anti-social behaviour:

- A safe space for children and young people
- Perception that crime and ASB will increase
- Opening hours:
  - Reduce hours to make savings
  - Others want longer hours/more convenient times to meet their needs
- Publicity – needs to go wider, especially during periods of lockdown
- Books:
  - More and better collection of books
  - Could not afford to purchase own books
  - Fear of fines deters loans
  - Longer loan periods needed
- Shared space – collaborate with local schools, businesses
- Operation:
  - Community and volunteer run an option
  - Value of professional library staff
- Income generation ideas:
  - Café
  - Hireable meeting spaces
  - Chargeable desk space for small businesses
  - Ticketed cultural events

## **Equalities Feedback**

- 4.11 Of the 1,397 respondents who answered the question on their gender: male (25%); female (71%); other (0.2%); prefer not to say (4%).
- 4.12 When asked for their age range: under 18 (1%); 18-30 (5%); 31-40 (24%); 41-50 (19%); 51-60 (15%); 61-70 (18%); 71-80 (10%); 81+ (2%); prefer not to say (5%).
- 4.13 To the question ‘Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?’: Yes, limited a lot (4%); yes, limited a little (11%); no (77%); prefer not to say (8%).
- 4.14 When describing their ethnic origin: white British (61%); white other (7%); Indian (5%); Asian other background (2%); black African (2%); black Caribbean (3%); prefer not to say (10%); other ethnic backgrounds (10%).

## **5 INVESTMENT IN LIBRARIES BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 5.1 One of the criteria for considering the five libraries for closure is the future repair and maintenance costs. These varied in scale:
- Bradmore Green - £20,000
  - Broad Green - £26,000
  - Sanderstead - £127,000
  - Shirley - £92,000

- South Norwood (existing) - £420,000
- South Norwood (new) - £890,000

5.2 At the March 2021 Council meeting capital investment was allocated to the Libraries service for:

5.2.1 Replacement of obsolete self-service kiosks and install Open + in three libraries - £650,000

5.2.2 Fit out of the new South Norwood Library - £890,000

5.3 It has been agreed that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) can be used to fund these works, to a value of £1.6m in 2021/22.

5.4 Additional CIL funding of £265,000 has been allocated for Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead and Shirley repairs and maintenance.

## **6 OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 Following the feedback from residents the Libraries service have reviewed available, feasible options to generate the 15% savings target, while maintaining a statutory libraries service. The options considered are:

- Close five libraries
- Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough
- Five community run libraries
- Outsource all libraries
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (one day per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries, with a Libraries presence
- Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries, with a Libraries presence

### **6.2 CLOSE FIVE LIBRARIES**

6.2.1 Proposal to permanently close Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley, and South Norwood libraries. Residents would be expected to use alternative neighbouring libraries, Homes Libraries Service, or digital library.

6.2.2 Savings would be achieved by a reduction in staffing levels by 10.99 FTE (17%), from 63.65 FTE to 52.66 FTE. This would achieve savings of £360,476/annum. In addition, further savings of £72,483 would be generated from a reduction in business rates and utilities. In total, it is estimated that savings of £432,959 would be achieved. These savings would be expected to be delivered in-year, and would be managed by the Council providing more control over the delivery.

6.2.3 This option does not achieve the full savings target.

6.2.4 By closing these five libraries there would be an overall reduction in weekly service hours of 246.5 hours, which is a 44% reduction. This would be

mitigated by the introduction of additional unstaffed hours in neighbouring libraries, utilising Open + technology. This mitigation would introduce 70 hours of unstaffed operating hours, limiting the reduction in weekly operating hours to 31%.

6.2.5 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a substantial impact upon the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Pregnancy and maternity

6.2.6 There are no or limited mitigations to the complete loss of libraries provision for these groups in these local communities.

6.2.7 Due to the inability to achieve the savings target, and the substantial impact on the local communities, the recommendation is to not include this option in second phase of public consultation.

### 6.3 **REDUCE SERVICE HOURS BY 21% ACROSS THE BOROUGH**

6.3.1 Proposal to reduce opening hours by 21% across the whole service. The reduction would be minimised in busier libraries, where possible.

6.3.2 Savings would be achieved by a reduction in staffing levels by 15.99 FTE (25%), from 63.65 FTE to 47.66 FTE. This would achieve savings of £506,980/annum. These savings would be expected to be delivered in-year through a staffing restructure, and would be managed by the Council providing more control over the delivery.

6.3.3 This option does achieve the full savings target.

6.3.4 By reducing opening hours there would be an overall reduction in weekly staffed operating hours of 270.5 hours, which is a 48% reduction. This would be mitigated by the introduction of additional unstaffed hours in neighbouring libraries, utilising Open + technology. This mitigation would introduce 150 hours of unstaffed operating hours, limiting the reduction in weekly operating hours to 21%.

6.3.5 Additionally, library opening days would be adjusted to ensure that at least one library in each area (north, central, and south) was open and staff available each day (Monday to Saturday).

6.3.6 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a moderate impact upon the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race

- Pregnancy & maternity

6.3.7 There are some mitigations to the reduction of libraries provision across the borough, particularly the use of Open + technology to provide unstaffed opening hours. All library buildings would remain open, but there would be some days when the service would only be available to registered Open + users and those times would not have any staff supervision to help with enquiries. Survey feedback identified that some library users could not access the service during because of working patterns. This mitigation allows some libraries to be accessible at the beginning and end of the day, and on closed days.

6.3.8 Due to the ability to achieve the savings target, and the mitigated impact on the local communities, the recommendation is to include this option in second phase of public consultation.

#### 6.4 **FIVE COMMUNITY RUN LIBRARIES**

6.4.1 Proposal for community managed buildings at Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley, and South Norwood libraries. Community organisations would lease the building from the Council to offer a community space, and take responsibility for building running costs. Croydon Libraries will continue to provide books and IT services, with 0.5 FTE staff presence at each site.

6.4.2 Savings would be achieved by a reduction in staffing levels by 8.49 FTE (13%), from 63.65 FTE to 55.16 FTE. This would achieve savings of £287,224/annum. In addition, further savings of £72,483 would be generated from a reduction in business rates and utilities. In total, it is estimated that savings of £359,707 would be achieved. It is unlikely that these savings could be delivered in-year due to the need to effectively procure these community run services.

6.4.3 This option does not achieve the full savings target.

6.4.4 Community groups would agree their own opening hours, subject to their operating model. The Council would provide 0.5 FTE per site to effectively manage the books and allow the library to remain as part of The Libraries Consortium. The benefit of this is continued access to the libraries management system, books from across the consortium, and IT for library users.

6.4.5 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a low impact upon all the protected characteristics.

6.4.6 There are mitigations to the complete loss of libraries provision for these groups in these local communities. Community groups would facilitate access to books, IT, and would run activities and events. It is hoped, but not guaranteed, that community groups would be able to operate on similar opening hours to the current libraries provision.

6.4.7 Due to the inability to achieve the savings target, the recommendation is to not include this option in second phase of public consultation.

## 6.5 **OUTSOURCE ALL LIBRARIES**

6.5.1 Proposal to outsource all libraries, preferably to a social enterprise or charitable organisation.

6.5.2 The contract would be openly procured with an annual operating budget of £2,898,500 to ensure the savings are achieved. To operate the same level of service provided now the partner would need to make service efficiencies or generate income generation. This model has been tested through a preliminary analysis by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) and, in their opinion, the savings target/income generation can be achieved.

6.5.3 A full tendering exercise would be required to engage with any interested organisation and to satisfy procurement legislation. It is anticipated that this would take between 6 and 12 months to complete the procurement and mobilise, therefore, savings would not be achieved in this financial year. Additional in-year savings in the Libraries service would need to be achieved to meet the Renewing Croydon savings target.

6.5.4 This option does achieve the full savings target but not within this financial year.

6.5.5 Opening hours would be reviewed by the operator to ensure that the service is efficient, while still meeting the needs of the local community. The GLL review states that there would not be a need to “reduce opening hours extensively but it would be sensible to make sure that the hours offered suit the needs of local residents”.

6.5.6 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a low impact upon all the protected characteristics.

6.5.7 It is likely that the service would be delivered in much the same way as it is under the Council. There may be adjustments to the operating hours to generate efficiencies, i.e. closed over lunchtimes. It is also feasible that there will be more paid events and activities to generate income back into the service.

6.5.8 Due to the ability to achieve the savings target, and the limited impact on the local communities, the recommendation is to include this option in second phase of public consultation.

## 6.6 **HYBRID – REDUCTION IN SERVICE HOURS (ONE DAY PER WEEK) TO EIGHT LIBRARIES AND FIVE COMMUNITY RUN LIBRARIES**

- 6.6.1 Proposal to reduce opening hours at eight libraries by one day per week. However at Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley and South Norwood this would be a reduction to two fully staffed days per week, with community organisations occupying the buildings during the remainder of the week. This option provides more staffing support from Libraries than the Community Run Libraries option.
- 6.6.2 The Council would retain responsibility for the building and community groups would hire the buildings to provide a community hub, with responsibility for covering a share of the building running costs. Croydon Libraries will continue to provide books and IT services, with two fully staffed days at each site.
- 6.6.3 Savings would be achieved by a reduction in staffing levels by 10.2 FTE (16%), from 63.65 FTE to 53.54 FTE. This would achieve savings of £316,526/annum. In addition, further savings of £36,000 would be generated from a reduction in business rates and utilities by sharing the space with community organisations. In total, it is estimated that savings of £352,526 would be achieved. These savings would be expected to be delivered in-year, and would be managed by the Council providing more control over the delivery.
- 6.6.4 This option does not achieve the full savings target.
- 6.6.5 By reducing opening hours there would be an overall reduction in weekly staffed operating hours of 222.5 hours, which is a 39% reduction. This would be mitigated by the introduction of additional unstaffed hours in neighbouring libraries, utilising Open + technology. This mitigation would introduce 94 hours of unstaffed operating hours, limiting the reduction in weekly operating hours to 23%.
- 6.6.6 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a low impact upon all the protected characteristics.
- 6.6.7 There are mitigations to the reduction of Council staffed libraries provision for these groups in these local communities. Community groups would facilitate access to books, IT, and would run activities and events. It is hoped, but not guaranteed, that community groups would be able to operate on similar opening hours to the current libraries provision. In addition, Open + technology would allow unstaffed access to libraries services.
- 6.6.8 Due to the inability to achieve the savings target, the recommendation is to not include this option in second phase of public consultation.
- 6.7 **HYBRID – REDUCTION IN SERVICE HOURS (TWO DAYS PER WEEK) TO EIGHT LIBRARIES AND FIVE COMMUNITY RUN LIBRARIES**
- 6.7.1 Proposal to reduce opening hours at eight libraries by two days per week. However at Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley and South Norwood this would be a reduction to two fully staffed days per week, with

community organisations occupying the buildings during the remainder of the week.

- 6.7.2 Community groups would lease the building from the Council and be responsible for utilities, repairs and maintenance. Croydon Libraries will continue to provide books and IT services, with two fully staffed days at each site.
- 6.7.3 Savings would be achieved by a reduction in staffing levels by 15.99 FTE (25%), from 63.65 FTE to 47.66 FTE. This would achieve savings of £506,980/annum. In addition, further savings of £72,483 would be generated from a reduction in business rates and utilities through the lease. In total, it is estimated that savings of £579,463 would be achieved. The staffing savings would be expected to be delivered in-year, and would be managed by the Council providing more control over the delivery. However, it is likely to take longer to achieve the buildings savings due to the need to effectively procure these community run services.
- 6.7.4 This option does achieve the full savings target.
- 6.7.5 By reducing opening hours there would be an overall reduction in weekly staffed operating hours of 270.5 hours, which is a 48% reduction. This would be mitigated by the introduction of additional unstaffed hours in neighbouring libraries, utilising Open + technology. This mitigation would introduce 150 hours of unstaffed operating hours, limiting the reduction in weekly operating hours to 21%.
- 6.7.6 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this option identifies that there would be a low impact upon all the protected characteristics.
- 6.7.7 There are mitigations to the reduction of Council staffed libraries provision for these groups in these local communities. Community groups would facilitate access to books, IT, and would run activities and events. It is hoped, but not guaranteed, that community groups would be able to operate on similar opening hours to the current libraries provision. In addition, Open + technology would allow unstaffed access to libraries services.
- 6.7.8 Due to the ability to achieve the savings target, the recommendation is to include this option in second phase of public consultation.

## **7 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Council undertake meaningful consultation with the public on the options that achieve the 15% operating budget reduction in the Libraries Service.
- 7.2 The options that meet this criteria are:
  - 7.2.1 Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough

- 7.2.2 Outsource all libraries
- 7.2.3 Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries
- 7.3 Each of these options has a varying level of impact on local communities. The impact has been assessed in the equalities impact assessments. This is summarised in the Options Assessment.
- 7.4 Where there is a proposed reduction in service hours, this has been mitigated as much as possible through the introduction of unstaffed opening hours with Open + technology. This will allow library users to be able to maintain access to books and IT sessions at times when there is no member of Libraries staff present. Feedback received during phase one of the consultation suggested that some people do not currently use libraries because they are not currently open outside of standard working hours. This mitigation would allow libraries with Open + technology to be accessible at the start and end of the day, to meet this demand.
- 7.5 All of the recommended options retain a library in the existing local communities. This reduces the impact on local communities, particularly those who provided feedback in the first phase of consultation that they would be unable to travel to a neighbouring local library. This impact on travel was particularly felt by residents with physical disabilities, elderly residents, young families, and those of low income who could not afford public transport costs.
- 7.6 All of the recommended options ensure that residents will continue to have access to books, digital access, study space, events and activities in their local community.
- 7.7 The Council will continue to fund the purchase of books and the provision of IT equipment, at existing levels, in all recommended options.
- 7.8 The first phase of consultation has started several conversations between the Libraries service and community organisations about how they can work together more collaboratively. It is hoped that this joint working approach will continue through each of the proposed options.
- 7.9 During the second phase of consultation, residents and library users will be able to provide feedback on their preference for future library provision within the borough.
- 7.10 A further paper will be presented to Council detailing the analysis of the feedback from the second phase of public consultation.
- 7.11 Council will make a decision on future Libraries provision within the borough.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 A second phase of Libraries public consultation will take place for eight weeks during the summer.
- 8.2 Residents and library users will be consulted on their preference for the future of the Libraries service in the borough.
- 8.3 A survey will be available online to gather feedback. Paper copies will be available on request from all libraries, via the dedicated answer phone, or via the dedicated librariesconsultation email address.
- 8.4 It is hoped that social distancing restrictions continue to ease and that there will be an opportunity to meet residents face to face. Library buildings are beginning to re-open to the public so residents will be able to talk directly to staff. Roadshows will be planned at each library to talk to residents about the proposals and answer questions directly.
- 8.5 Further online webinars will be held in the first few weeks of the consultation period to answer questions from residents. These proved popular during the first phase of consultation.
- 8.6 A dedicated Libraries consultation website will be used to access all of the available material and link to videos, documents and the survey.
- 8.7 The consultation will be advertised in library buildings. Visitors will be able to view the consultation documentation, and collect paper copies of the survey, or complete online using library computers (subject to Covid social distancing restrictions).
- 8.8 Copies of all the information can be translated for residents upon request.
- 8.9 After the consultation period has ended, the survey results will be analysed and reported to Council. This will form the basis of the decision on the future provision of libraries in the borough.

## 9 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### 9.1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

	Current Year	Medium Term Financial Strategy – 3 year forecast		
	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000
<b>Revenue Budget Available</b>	£3,410,000	£2,898,500	£2,898,500	£2,898,500
Expenditure Income	£0 £0	£0	£0	£0
<b>Effect of decision from report</b>	<b>-£511,500</b>	£0	£0	£0
Expenditure Income	£0 £0	£0	£0	£0
<b>Remaining Budget</b>	£2,898,500	£0	£0	£0
<b>Capital Budget available</b>	£1,875,000	£0	£0	£0
Expenditure Income	£0 £0	£0	£0	£0
<b>Effect of decision from report</b>	£0	£0	£0	£0
Expenditure Income	£1,875,000	£0	£0	£0
<b>Remaining Budget</b>	£0	£0	£0	£0

Any underachievement in savings will need to be met from within other existing Place department budgets.

#### 9.2 The effect of the decision

The impact of these recommendations to rationalise the use of libraries (without closing any libraries) will generate savings for the Council.

#### 9.3 Risks

There is a risk that the full extent of the savings target of £511,500 will be partially met over 2021/22 due to the timing of consultation with residents.

#### 9.4 **Options**

The recommended options include reducing service hours by 21% across the borough, outsourcing all libraries and/or a hybrid of service reduction (to 2 days per week) of 8 libraries and 5 community run libraries. None of these options result in closure of libraries as it does not yield any significant operational cost savings in its closure.

#### 9.5 **Future savings/efficiencies**

The options highlighted above is likely to result in annual revenue savings of £511,500 in operating costs which include staffing costs (account for 60% of running costs), business rates, utilities, ICT licences for software and digital media/ebooks as well as book purchases.

The capital budget of £1.875m for 21/22 does not include the committed expenditure carried over from 20/21 of £0.304m as this is subject to Cabinet approval.

There is further work to be carried out to explore revenue generation of libraries by bringing in community groups to host activities as fee paying events. A series of pilot events will be held over the summer period in 21/22 to test this out further.

Approved by: Geetha Blood, Interim Head of Finance Place and Resources

### **10 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

10.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the Interim Director of Law and Governance that the report seeks to consult on the possible options set-out within the recommendations.

10.2 Following the consultation a substantive report will be provided setting out the option that will be considered and the reasons for it.

10.3 There are no further legal or propriety comments at this stage.

Approved by Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Interim Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

### **11 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

1.1 There will HR impact issues arising from this report which will be managed under the Council's HR Policies and Procedures, and in the first instance the Restructure and Reorganisation Policy and Procedures will apply.

Approved by: Jennifer Sankar, Head of HR Place, on behalf of Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources

## **12 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 12.1 The impact on the proposals varies for each option. An Equalities Assessment has been produced for each option to capture the impact that it will have on protected characteristic groups in local communities.
- 12.2 In option 1 – Close Five Libraries, there is a substantial impact upon age, disability, race, pregnancy and maternity with no or limited mitigations.
- 12.3 In option 2 – Reduce Hours By 21% Across All Libraries, there is moderate impact upon age, disability, gender, race, pregnancy and maternity. The impact is mitigated by keeping all library buildings open to the public, and offsetting some previously staffed hours with access to buildings, books and IT via Open + technology.
- 12.4 In option 3 – Five Community Run Libraries, there is low impact upon all protected characteristics. The impact is mitigated by community groups facilitating access to books, IT, and run activities and events.
- 12.5 In option 4 – Outsource All Libraries, there is low impact upon all protected characteristics. The impact is mitigated by the partner operating all thirteen libraries on a similar basis to the current service provision.
- 12.6 In option 5 – Hybrid Reduction in Service Hours (One Day Per Week) to Eight Libraries And Five Community Run Libraries, there is low impact upon all protected characteristics. The impact is mitigated by community groups facilitating access to books, IT, and run activities and events. In addition, Open + technology would allow unstaffed access to libraries services.
- 12.7 In option 6 – Hybrid Reduction in Service Hours (Two Days Per Week) to Eight Libraries And Five Community Run Libraries, there is low impact upon all protected characteristics. The impact is mitigated by community groups facilitating access to books, IT, and run activities and events. In addition, Open + technology would allow unstaffed access to libraries services.
- 12.8 Equalities Assessments have been undertaken for each of the options to meet the engagement provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of assessing the impact on people with protected characteristics. This will help us to better understand the impact of the proposals on the different characteristics.
- 12.9 Approved by: Yvonne Okiyo, Equalities Manager, on behalf Gavin Handford, Director of Policy & Partnership

## **13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 13.1 There is no environmental impact of this report.

## **14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

14.1 There is no impact on crime and disorder from this report.

## **15. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

### **15.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

NO

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Robert Hunt, Interim Head of Assets & Involvement, ext 63309

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Close 5 libraries

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Reduce service hours by 21% across the borough

Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Five community run libraries

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Outsource all libraries

Appendix 5 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Hybrid – reduction in service hours (one day per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries

Appendix 6 – Equalities Impact Assessment – Hybrid – reduction in service hours (two days per week) to eight libraries and five community run libraries

Appendix 7 – Options following libraries consultation April 2021

Appendix 8 – Options – Opening Hours

Appendix 9 – Options Assessment Matrix

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Supplementary Agenda - Review of Libraries Public Consultation - Phase One report